

A VOICE FROM ITALY:

BEING

NOTICES OF THE EVANGELICAL WORK IN THAT
COUNTRY.

No. 84, MAY 1881.

"Thus God works to-day both in secret individual conversions, and in wide-spread national revivals. Bankruptcies, storms, diseases, wars, are charged to batter down the defences, and then living disciples go in by the breach to convert a kingdom or win a soul. Missionaries seldom begin the work, and providences never complete it. Each kind of instrument is best in its own place and time. Do not go forward without providential openings, lest you should spend your strength for nought; and do not neglect providential openings, lest the lost opportunity should never return."—*Late Rev. William Arnot.*

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A VOICE FROM ITALY.

NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENTS.

It is particularly requested that in letters for the "Voice" the names of persons and places be written with special distinctness.

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QUARTERLY LETTER FROM REV. DR STEWART.

LEGHORN, 12th April 1881.

ITALY is in a state of political excitement at present. The Cairoli Ministry, never strong, and of late tottering, has fallen at last, owing to vote of want of confidence, carried by a small majority in the Chamber of Deputies on the 7th of this month, emerging from the state of affairs at Tunis, where there prevails a strong rivalry between the French and Italians. The vote of want of confidence proceeded on the ground that Cairoli had shown deficiency of energy in Tunisian matters, by which the interests of his country had suffered. The day after this vote the Ministry waited on the king, requesting him to accept their demission, but up to this hour he has not actually done so, as it is difficult to find a Premier who can group around him a stable Ministry. King Humbert sent twice for Farini, the President of the Chamber of Deputies, but on both occasions he firmly declined the offer. The latest news is that he has sent for Dipretis,

one of the ex-ministers, but I need not enlarge, as before this is printed your readers will have learned from the daily papers how the crisis has terminated. The Minister of Finance in presenting his budget lately was able to show a considerable increase of income as compared with that of last year. Both Houses have voted a bill for the abolition of the present forced paper currency, and during the course of the summer it will probably begin to take effect. It has already caused a very sensible decrease in the amount of sums transmitted from England or elsewhere for missionary work in this country, the rate of exchange for £1 sterling having] fallen from lit. 28·00 to lit. 25·50. The bill for "Electoral Reform," promised two years ago, is still a problem to be worked out in the future.

The Pope has given mortal offence to the Legitimists in France by refusing to link himself irrevocably with their falling fortunes. In spite of the Count de Chambord, and Count de Mun, the champion of their interests, who declares that "in France it is impossible to be a good Catholic without being a legitimist," Leo XIII. declares his neutrality. The following is a brief extract from *L'Aurora*, the organ of the Vatican, on this subject :— "The Church from its foundation onwards has assisted at the transformation of governments, peoples, and society in general. In the midst of human changes, which rapidly succeed one another, it has remained the depositary of principles necessary in all times and in all places. It inculcates the application of these principles, asking *without distinction all governments and all peoples* to respect and practise them. How then could an institution so immense, with so vast a mission, tie itself down to *one or another political form, to one or another party, to one or another dynasty?*" The article ends by assuring those for whose benefit it was written, "that the legitimist party in France is actually a minority, which has no prospect for a very long time of becoming the majority." It is said that the Legitimists threaten revenge by withholding the "*Obolo di San Pietro*." Whether this be the case or not, there has been such a falling off in these offerings that the Pope, after allowing only three years to elapse since the last jubilee, has proclaimed an extraordinary one for this year to fill the empty exchequer. This is too vulgar a truth to be published to "all Christianity;" the Pope, therefore, in a discourse to his Cardinals, decorously describes the

object of the jubilee in these words :—“ Besides being persuaded that it is from heaven we must look for opportune aid (against the enemies of the Church), without which all our fatigue and efforts are vain, and remembering that in its most stormy epochs it has always been the custom of the Church to intimate public prayers and works of penitence, we have resolved in this year to open for all Christendom an extraordinary jubilee, in order that through the multiplication of prayers and works of penitence the Lord may more quickly be inclined to clemency, and may prepare better times for the Church.”

The term of Lent and of “ preaching friars ” always brings along with it a recrudescence of savage bigotry on the part of the ignorant mob, in town or country, against the *Evangelici*, but of late years it has not broken loose in acts of violence. This year has been an exception, and Marsala, in Sicily, very narrowly escaped the mark of infamy which attaches to Barletta for innocent blood shed there ten years ago at the instigation of the priests. In the town of Marsala (celebrated as the landing place of Garibaldi and his thousand volunteers) the Wesleyan Methodists have a mission station conducted by Sig. Lettieri, who had advertised a series of conferences in answer to the sermons of the Quaresimal Preacher, Padre Previtti, against the Protestants. Furious at this, the priests of the Duomo, with the preacher at their head, excited the ignorant crowd to put down the heretics, and actually lent them the consecrated standard which is carried through the streets in the processions of the sacrament. The fanatics then hastened to the Syndic, and obtained from him the services of the municipal band to head their procession. The death of Sig. Lettieri was their design, and he escaped with difficulty by flying over the roofs of the houses adjoining that in which he lived, while his landlord, Sig. Bruno, at first mistaken for him, was rescued from a like fate with the greatest difficulty. Banked in their original purpose, the mob next broke into the room used as the Mission Chapel, carried out pulpit, benches, and everything found in it, to the street, and there set fire to and consumed the whole, the municipal band playing, the consecrated banner of the Duomo flying, and the mob cheering, while this *auto-da-fé* was being carried out. The procession then marched back to the Duomo, where the Archpriest, surrounded by his clergy, bestowed on it

the benediction. Next day, when the work was done, Padre Previtti rebuked the people for their zeal! The outrage was mentioned in the Chamber of Deputies, and the Minister of the Interior promised that the matter should be carefully investigated. A similar, though not so serious a case of molestation occurred to a congregation of the Chiesa Libera about the same time, at a small town called Mottola, situated somewhere between Tarantò and Lecce.

Some time ago the municipality of Milan, in making a new street, cut through a portion of an old church called *S. Giovanni in Conca*, and sold what remained to the Rev. Sig. Turin, to be converted into a church for the Waldensian congregation in that city. M. Turin spent a considerable portion of last year in America raising the funds necessary for reconstructing the edifice, and though still short by £500 of what is required to free it from debt, the work has been pushed on, and the church is announced to be opened on the 8th of May. The place is seated for 400 to 500 persons. It has cost from first to last £5000, of which the congregation has contributed £400. The want of a suitable *locale* has weighed heavily for many years on Sig. Turin's mind, and has hindered his missionary work, and all who know him will rejoice in the success which has attended his labours.

I am sorry to say that the *Tribunale di prima Istanza* in Rome gave a decision in favour of the *Confraternito del Carmine*, prohibiting the building of the Waldensian Church in that city within nine feet of the Carmine Church, which would practically render a considerable portion of the ground in the Via Nazionale useless for the erection of a church on account of want of width. The lawyers are confident that the judgment is not according to law, and have taken the matter to the Court of Appeal, where the cause comes on for hearing on the 21st inst. If the decision should again be unfavourable the plans must be changed, but the site of the Waldensian Church will not be abandoned.

The congregation in connection with the Chiesa Libera in Turin has suddenly gone over, with their pastor at their head, to the American Episcopal Methodist Mission; while that of Genoa has broken up, the most of its frequenters joining other denominations in that city, and leaving a mere handful with the

pastor. The congregation was composed of heterogeneous elements, and Signore Stagnitta will succeed better without some of them.

Some of your readers may remember that the Italian Religious Publication Society suffered a very heavy loss through the gross dishonesty of an Italian named Bassi, who was the director of the printing and issuing department; but the Society has been completely relieved from the liabilities thereby incurred through the Christian liberality of Lady Harriet Scott Bentinck, who sent me £1000 to set the Society on its feet again.

The accommodation for students in the Waldensian Theological College in Palazzo Salviati, Florence, having become too limited, owing to the number of students being double what it was in 1861 when it was bought, I have made an effort since the beginning of this year to raise £700 to add a storey to one of the wings of the house, and through God's blessing I have completed that sum. Allow me, with grateful thanks, to acknowledge the subscriptions I have received:—George F. Barbour, Esq., Bonskied, £100; James Stevenson, Esq., Largs, £100; Mrs Gamble, Normount, Torquay (promised), £100; Robert L. Stuart, Esq., New York, £100; Robert Macfie, Esq., of Airds, £100; James White, Esq., Overtoun, £50; John Macfie, Esq., Edinburgh, £50; Peter Denny, Esq., Dumbarton, £50; the late James Lenox, Esq., of New York, £50; James Galbraith, Esq., Glasgow, £50; J. J. Kerr, Esq., Glasgow, £20. The building will be commenced at 1st May, and will be roofed in, it is expected, before winter.

My grateful thanks are also due to Miss Ellen Philip, Edinburgh, for £10, 5s. 6d., the proceeds of a private bazaar got up by herself and a few friends, in aid of the Leghorn Harbour Mission. During my long ministry here it is the first gift I ever received for this object.

The Rev. Dr Lantaret, Moderator of the Waldensian Church, is now passing through the press a very valuable work which is completely out of print, viz., "L'Histoire Ecclesiastique des Eglises Reformées recueillies en quelques Valées du Piedmont et circonvoisines autrefois appellees Eglises Vaudoises, par Pierre Gilles, Pasteur de l'Eglise Reformée de La Tour," Geneva, 1655. In other words—The History of the Waldensian Church, by Pierre Gilles, in two volumes of 500 pages each. The price

to subscribers is only four francs, with postage additional. Subscriptions should be sent direct to Dr Lantaret, Pomaretto Perosa-Argentina, Piemonte.

ROBERT W. STEWART.

THE WALDENSIAN CHURCH.—LONDON VAUDOIS COMMITTEE.

On Tuesday, 29th March last, by the kind permission of the Archbishop of Canterbury, who presided, a meeting on behalf of the above Committee was held in the Library of Lambeth Palace.

Prayer having been offered,

The Rev. J. N. Worsfold gave a brief statement of the history of the London Vaudois Committee, which was instituted in 1825. After having pursued a career of great activity up to 1873, it had since then fallen into abeyance, except as the means of transmitting the annual Royal Grant which represents the residue of a collection made during the Commonwealth. Among its other chief results has been the kindling of a widespread sympathy among all classes of Protestants in favour of the Church of the Valleys, as well as the maintaining of the old traditional sympathy of the Church of England towards this faithful witness of the truth on the continent of Europe. Another result had been political intervention with the Sardinian Government in alleviating the disabilities inflicted by that State on the Vaudois. Yet another result has been the aid rendered in the restoration and erection of Christian schools and parsonages, at a cost of not less than £20,000. Led by the increasing necessities of the Vaudois pastors, it has been deemed very expedient to resume its labours with a view of continuing the good work by raising funds to augment their insufficient stipends. In conclusion, the speaker added that letters of apology had been received from the Bishops of London, Winchester, and Rochester, who were unable to attend. Sir John Kennaway, Bart., M.P., wrote, saying that he much regretted that Parliamentary business rendered it impossible for him to be present. Letters had also been received from Viscount Sandon, M.P., and from Lord Harrowby, who were unavoidably prevented from attending.

The Very Rev. the Dean of Canterbury (Dr Payne Smith) moved the first resolution :—“ Resolved, that, in view of the painful privation endured by the pastors of the Vaudois Church, in the valleys of Piedmont, it is desirable to take immediate steps for raising a capital sum of not less than £12,000, in order to augment their stipends.” The progress to which reference had been made commenced long ago, when efforts were put forth by the Dukes of Savoy to crush this little Church among the Valleys. Much would be found respecting the history of the movement in the books of Dr Gilly, and in some of the smaller books, in which, with great fervour, events have been chronicled. During earlier times there was a great deal of interest taken in the Vaudois by leaders of thought in this country. John Milton had written about them, and during the time of the Commonwealth a considerable sum of money was raised. But, of course, the sum at the disposal of the Committee was far too small for the work needing to be done among the Vaudois pastors, who, until the days of Dr Gilly, had too much passed out of the memory of Christians in England. When, in their rambles, in other days, travellers came upon them in Piedmont, they were found to be in a truly lamentable state, and the state of education among the people very low. Dr Gilly was successful in exciting a great deal of interest respecting them in England, and Bishops Sumner and Blomfield also shared this interest. General Beckwith devoted a considerable sum to put things into a better state, for he established a College at La Tour, where pastors could be instructed. He also established schools, and encouraged the use of the Italian language, because he thought from their geographical position the Vaudois would be useful in disseminating religion in Italy ; and by being placed in some of the large towns could be able to do a most important missionary work. It was found that missionaries from other countries could not obtain a hearing, but gradually, thanks to Cavour, the position of the people in the Valleys had been greatly improved ; a good education was given to children, and the stipends of the pastors were raised. Notwithstanding this, however, the latter were still in a condition of great poverty. With all the assistance sent them from this country this continued. Mr Lake, who was present to-day, had collected funds for the Valleys during many years. In Scotland a deep and practical interest was felt in the work

by the Presbyterian Churches. The income of these Vaudois pastors was about £60 each. The professors are paid from a separate fund, and their work is to train pastors. The object of the meeting to-day under the kind presidency of the Archbishop, was to raise a capital sum of £12,000. Friends in Scotland have successfully helped on this movement, and if England is equally zealous, it would become possible that the income of the pastors might be raised to £100 a year. Money had so much decreased in value that a sum which would have been enough years ago, formed now but a very narrow income. It was hoped that this sum might be raised, considering the noble stand these good men had made for the faith. There should be interest enough felt in their cause to raise such an amount. If this sum were forthcoming, it would place the pastors in a satisfactory and comfortable position. He could not but hope that the Committee would be successful in the object they sought to attain. There was in this country often the feeling that people did not interest themselves very readily in Churches abroad. People in the days of the Commonwealth appeared to take a far deeper interest, and it might be doubted whether those of the present day felt as deep an interest. The Vaudois form of Church government has been Presbyterian, and that may have been one reason why people in Scotland had exhibited greater sympathy. Many of their chief evangelists in Italy, at the present time, were thoroughly educated men.

Mr Alderman and Sheriff Fowler, M.P., in seconding the resolution, said they had been told that less interest was taken now in the progress of the Church than in the time of the Reformation. It struck him, however, that although reasons might be given to account for this, there were far stronger reasons why a deeper interest should be shown now. More was known of that part of the world now, for example, in which the people lived to whom they desired to give the Gospel than was formerly known. There was another thing that struck him in connection with this matter, and that was the wonderful change in the position of things in Italy within the last thirty years. Twenty-five years ago one would have been afraid to have gone for fear of finding oneself in the clutches of the police. That state of things now, however, is happily at an end. It was also very encouraging to know that so far as the circulation of the

Bible is concerned the Word of God has now free course there. But while there was every opportunity for the circulation of the Scriptures, and for the preaching of the Gospel, there was nevertheless an immense amount of infidelity. That Popery has decreased might be true, but that Infidelity had increased there could be no question. Instead of there having been a change for the better, there had been in this respect a change for the worse. They should therefore heartily welcome all movements which have for their object the spread of the Gospel in Italy. The Church of England and other Churches had gone out to proselytize in that country ; but what they should take care of was the fact that the most likely Church to have influence is the Vaudois Church. It had been raised up in the dark ages ; the inhabitants had suffered great persecution for Christ's sake. They could not but feel, therefore, how interesting that Church must be, and what a great claim it had upon the Christian sympathies of those in other countries. He believed he might say, in the name of all present, that they were greatly indebted to his Grace for his kindness in permitting a meeting on behalf of the Vaudois pastors to be held in the library of his palace. I can but hope, said the speaker in conclusion, that the sanction your Grace has given to the object of this meeting will not only be a great fact in the history of the London Vaudois Committee, but for many years prove an encouragement to our brethren yonder, and that from this day forth the Word of God may increasingly have free course and be glorified.

The Most Rev. President (the Archbishop of Canterbury) said : —As I cannot stay to the end of the meeting, I should like to say what I would have said then. I consider it a great honour to be allowed to place this library at your disposal for this meeting. You have heard that several of my predecessors have been interested in this work, and I am glad of the opportunity to distinctly record my own desire to co-operate in a work which was so dear to some of the best spirits of the Church of England, and to act in unison with those on the continent and elsewhere who are determined to take their stand upon the pure Gospel of Christ. I have been requested by Dr Robertson of Greyfriars, Edinburgh, to say how sorry he is that he is unable to be present to-day. Many of you may know that an

effort is being carried on with great success in connection with the Scottish Waldensian Committee similar to that made here. I think we ought to take the opportunity of uniting with men of other communions than our own in a great work of this kind. All of you who have read the papers which have been brought under your notice to-day are aware that there are great and important differences between ourselves and the Vaudois pastors ; but that has never prevented the truest sons of the Church of England from co-operating with these men, and I trust will not do so. One cannot help thinking that there has grown up in later times a spirit of estrangement between the Protestant Churches of the continent and our own. Whose fault that is it is not for me to inquire ; but I trust, in a case like this, we may have no differences, but that we may have God's blessing in proceeding with a work in which our ancestors took part. The Dean of Canterbury has well said that the work is of two kinds ; and the first part is that which calls this meeting together, that we may see how we can assist these poor pastors who, in their mountains and valleys, are confined to a stipend that is scarcely sufficient for their maintenance, and which is becoming more and more insufficient. I am glad to see some wholesome signs of the money being restored in our day which formerly was appropriated to other purposes. It also gives me satisfaction to see that the ancient Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts annually transmits a sum of money to these suffering pastors. I trust that this is a proof that whatever want of confidence may at one time have existed as to these old Churches over the waters, there still remains a general sentiment on the part of the Church of England to maintain its connection with these bodies.

But I cannot help looking far beyond the limits of these Valleys to that great country of Italy, which has so many associations in the past, and to which the whole civilised world is so much indebted, and which in dark times, with all its faults, preserved a kind of Christianity—that country with its associations of art and literature to which so many are ready to turn, I cannot help thinking has a great claim upon us in the present day. We have done much to help on the cause of Italian independence, and the great statesman who ruled the country so long, and with such success as to be regarded as the father of his country, among other things secured

the blessing of a free Bible there, and the power of disseminating it. We are responsible at least for having assisted in making a free and independent Italy ; but are we to be unmindful of its highest claim ? Its religious condition must force itself upon the heart of every English Christian. The great Italian statesman thought he had done a wonderful work when he proclaimed a free Church in a free State ; but that is not so easily done, for unless people have freedom in their hearts it is not so easy really to give them freedom. I am not so sure that it is one whit more free than it was before. A free Church may mean one in which every one is free to follow the commands of Jesus Christ, and to do his Master's service according to the light of his conscience. It may also mean a Church which has got possession of the hearts of the peasantry and their imaginations, and which, having a system of its own, is free to impose that system, not by open violence, but by a thousand arts upon a people who desire to be free from it. It may present Christianity in such an aspect that men have no choice between blank infidelity on the one hand and the sacrifice of reason on the other. A Church thus free may become a great curse to a country. I am afraid that the glorious prospect which Cavour thought he saw opening up has, to some extent, ended in disappointment. If that is the case, surely it is a duty to encourage every effort which endeavours to present before these people something more approaching to the Church of the Gospel. In earlier days people were inclined to say, "Wait a little ; you will have a Church, you will find, that you can support ; it is better not to separate these people—you had better wait until the whole of Italy becomes a great reformed Catholic Church." We have waited long, but as life is passing we had better wait no longer. I am afraid no encouragement has been given by the Italian Government. Let us not be half-hearted in this matter. In Florence the College is now making progress, at all events it is holding up the light. Let us be thankful, and let us help them to do it. It is a great thing to have this historic, although humble, old Church, endeavouring to accomplish a portion of this great work. His Grace closed by putting the resolution, which was unanimously adopted. Upon the Archbishop quitting the chair, the Dean of Canterbury presided over the remainder of the proceedings.

Mr G. H. Lake (St Leonard's) moved the second resolution :—

"That a subscription list be commenced forthwith, contributions being sent to the care of Francis A. Bevan, Esq., of the firm of Messrs Barclay, Bevan, & Co., 54 Lombard Street, or to the Rev. J. N. Worsfold, Haddlesey Rectory, near Selby, the honorary treasurer to the fund." He said it was with great thankfulness to God that he took part in this meeting to-day. When he looked back to twenty-five years ago and remembered General Beckwith, he could not forget that it was the General who had first suggested the fund for the Vaudois pastors. It was in March 1865 that the speaker, when in Turin, first had the opportunity of meeting with him, and had gained from him a great deal of valuable information. As he was then going into the Valleys, the General gave him and his wife introductions to some of the pastors. "Is there anything that stray English people like ourselves can do to be of any use?" was the question he had put to General Beckwith. "Certainly," was the reply ; "there is a work which you and your wife can do well. The stipends of the pastors are miserably insufficient, and you might make it known so that something might be done." They had the pleasure of doing what they could. In glancing at the sources from which the pastors derived their income, the speaker said that about two years ago their stipends were reduced to £60 per year. He was astonished to find this, and he took opportunities of examining how these worthy men lived. They were, for the most part, poor, but they were also men of culture. He knew several of them, and he believed that they and their families would be deemed worthy of being received by any family of education in this country, for, although poor, they were men of great ability and scholarship.

The Rev. J. Bennett, in seconding the resolution, said his words should be few. They had to-day placed before them the record of facts, and the best thing now to do would be to leave them to do their work in their own way. Mr Lake, who for so many years had taken so deep an interest in this work, had made a statement concerning the straitened incomes of the pastors that he felt sure would touch all hearts who heard it or who would read it. If the Christians of England had the conviction of the sufferings of these faithful witnesses for the truth, they would deny themselves to give some of their comforts to these brethren. The Vaudois Church was a standing

witness to the power of God's truth. They were sometimes asked the question, "Where was your Church before Martin Luther?" One answer was suggested by the meeting of to-day. It could be said that Church was in these valleys in the north of Italy, and though men tried to quench it in blood, they had to deal "with the bush that burned, yet never was consumed." If the hearts of all present felt that, he was sure those hearts would go out to this Church, which was reformed before the Reformation, and a Protestant Church while Protestantism in mediæval times was only a dim light faintly shining. In conclusion he made an eloquent appeal for a good collection.

The resolution was unanimously adopted.

The Rev. J. N. Worsfold moved that the best thanks of the meeting are due to the Archbishop of Canterbury for his kindness in granting the use of Lambeth Library, and for presiding this afternoon. Thanks were also moved to the Deputy-Chairman, the Dean of Canterbury. The speaker added that this movement owed much to the Deputy-Chairman, who had always given him valuable counsel, and therefore it afforded him special pleasure to couple his name with that of the Most Rev. the Archbishop in this vote of thanks.

The Venerable Archdeacon Whately said he had known this work for thirty years, and he could truly say that if ever there was a people deserving of the support of English Christians, it was the people of Waldensian Church. If they wish to be well informed upon the matter, he would recommend them to read the Rev. J. N. Worsfold's own account of it.

The meeting was closed by the Benediction being pronounced.
—Abridged from the *Record* newspaper.

LETTERS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "VOICE FROM ITALY."

Written in English.

GENOA, 5th April 1881.

MY DEAR SIR,—I duly received your postal card, and I have seen to it that you will receive in time what you asked me for. I had intended to write at length to you, and to give some

new details about our work, but my hands have been so full of late that it has been out of my power to find half-an-hour free. Besides my usual duties, I had to give several conferences in the new *locale* in Via Chiabrera. The number of the hearers, instead of diminishing after the first curiosity is satisfied, as is often the case, has gone on increasing so much that last Sunday they were "packed like herrings in a barrel." The number in itself is encouraging, but what is still more so is the unwavering attention with which they listen. Several of the hearers, whose sympathy have been enlisted in Via Chiabrera, have found their way to the church in Via Assarotti, so that on the last Sabbath I had one of the finest audiences that could have been seen in Italy in an evangelical church out of the Valleys. The subject was, "God so loved the world," &c. I must say that controversy is carefully banished from our sermons on Sundays. People know it, so that that fine audience did not gather to be amused, but to attend an evangelical worship. I wish you had been present and watched the countenances and seen the tearful eyes, and you would have felt that the Lord was present speaking to the hearts, and moving them as He alone can do. In short, the essay of going out from the church and of holding meetings in halls has proved a success in Genova and in Florence. I thought so, now I am sure of it, and can speak from experiences made. I should wish to make the experiment in several other cities. I see that we can, with God's help and blessing, carry on MacAll's plan in Italy with as much success. I should even say more, if I am to compare our meetings in Via Chiabrera during the last three months and the MacAll ones I have seen in Paris. Unfortunately, we have not the means. We can hardly collect what is necessary for the ordinary work; how can we undertake this new one? When I saw in Paris the MacAll meetings, and looked at the halls, finely situated, well lighted, &c., &c., I could with great difficulty refrain from transgressing the tenth commandment. I hope I am not misunderstood. I don't mean to disparage the churches and praise the hall meetings, as if they were to be preferred. The two have their own usefulness. The halls are a good net to catch the fishes that don't come to the church for many reasons, but the church is the best means to keep and feed them. I am sure that you realise what I must

feel under the present circumstances ; to have a way opened, to know that it is a good one to advance the Lord's kingdom, and to be unable to follow it ! It is a great heart-breaking. You will say, perhaps, " Trust the Lord, and go ahead." I have done so, my dear sir. I have opened the halls I referred to in simple faith, and without knowing at all how the funds would be provided for. They will be, I trust, in time. But, meanwhile, some of our supporters, for excellent reasons, have been obliged to diminish their contributions by the half. It is this fact which, so to say, leads me to write in this sense. I feel it is my duty to lay the state of matters clearly before our friends, the readers of the *Voice*. Let them understand well that if we appear sometimes slow, there is a good reason for it. A man with tied legs can't run very quickly.

The Church of Rome seems to become more conscious that the ground becomes slippery under her feet. I am sure that, through the Confessional, she has learnt to know that the evangelical party was gaining ground, and that many who don't show as yet their faces in the evangelical meetings, yet sympathise with those who do. The *mot d'ordre* went through the Peninsula. Never, as yet, have the Lent preachers been so bitter against the evangelicals as this year. In two places, Marsala and Mottola, a fanatical mob has invaded the meeting-places and the houses of the evangelists, who escaped with their lives through God's providence. If in larger cities, like Genova and Florence, &c., such has not been the case, it is because people are more enlightened, and the priests know quite well that if they were to attempt such deeds their cause would lose rather than gain by them. But the will is the same everywhere. The clerical party are working as they had never done before. I *do* rejoice at it. Let us have opposition, persecution, anything, rather than that apathy which buries everything under the silence of dead indifference. I should not dare to say that there is, as yet, a *revival* in Italy, in the sense usually given to the word. No ; but certainly there is already a little more concern about religion and religious questions. Is it the dawn of the day, or simply an aurora borealis ? God knows. But that God who knows it is the great God, who wills not the death but the conversion of sinners. Oh, let us beseech Him, and pray so earnestly that He may send His vivifying Spirit to breathe on these hardened consciences, and

make them alive ; and to lead them to feel that there is no other way to be saved except *one*—through Jesus Christ.—With kind regards, yours sincerely,

MATTEO PROCHET.

Written in Italian.

POGGIO MIRTETO (SABINES),
February 1881.

ON the 18th January I was on my way to Salisano to visit the Novelli family, at present in affliction on account of the serious illness of a young girl of nineteen. The Signora Maddalena sent me a message saying that, in such circumstances, no other consolations can avail than those that the Christian religion gives.

Passing through Castel S. Pietro, at a short distance from the gate, I met Signor Pietro Rendina, a proprietor there, who stopped me for a few minutes' friendly talk. Just then I was recognised by the rude and boorish chaplain, who happened to be at the gate, and who at once ran off to the church, where he began to ring the bell violently and continuously as on remarkable occasions, such as great storms in summer, &c. I laughingly observed to Rendina, “Surely this is a fête day in Castello ?” “No,” he replied. “Then what is the meaning of this great noise of bells?” “I can't tell you.” “Well, but there must be some extraordinary reason for it.” “I do not believe this rude priest would receive you as he would his bishop. I must go and see what the foolish man is about. Come to my house.”

The place was almost deserted, but the few women who remained in it all quickly came out to ask what this ringing of bells meant. The men, who were working in the fields, hastened into town, thinking that a fire had broken out. Rendina sent a man to ask the priest what had happened, and he returned laughing like a madman, saying, “The priest has gone out of his mind : he keeps ringing the bells and calling out, ‘May God deliver us ! May God keep him at a distance.’ These words he goes on repeating, and will listen to no one.”

“This is meant for me,” I replied ; “he wants to stir up the people against me, as the result will prove.”

Then Signor Rendina said : "Prepare a sermon which must be as stirring as the sound of those bells, and I shall think of the rest."

He went out, and came to the small square in front of the church, where he announced to all the people there assembled the reason of the bell-ringing, and his reason for detaining me at Castello, adding that it was my desire to justify myself to the public, and, in a sermon, make the innocent motive of my mission evident, more particularly as I was on my way to Salisano.

About ten in the morning a heavy rain began to fall, and the surrounding mountains became covered with snow. The bad weather brought all the inhabitants in from the fields, and among these the report soon spread of what was about to take place. A deputation was formed from among themselves to go to the Baroness, and ask from her the permission to make use of one of the halls in the Baronial Palace, which was readily granted.

A two o'clock the rain ceased, and I tried to hasten on my preparations in order to get through in time to reach Salisano before night.

Accordingly the deputation was informed, and, in the twinkling of an eye, the whole village was in motion, carrying chairs and benches on which to sit. The hall had been a granary, lately put into order and restored, and capable of holding the whole town.

There is no trifling with peasants. One part of the deputation came to accompany me to the palace, another part went to fetch the poor, trembling chaplain. Two men brought him, holding him by the arm, and while he was assured no harm would come to him, he was, at the same time, informed that he must listen to my sermon.

The curious were ready to make a row on the appearance of the priest, but I warned them to be prudent. Before beginning the religious service, I felt it necessary to explain how it had come about that I was detained at Castello rather than at Salisano, for which place I was bound. I related various episodes, not excluding that of Poggio Bastone, to prove that the priests are the same everywhere; that it is their nature to go against the Word of God, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and all evangelical morality, in order to uphold the political and mate-

rial interests of the Vatican ; and that they are obliged blindly to believe in and submit to the Papacy. I then began the service with the invocation and a short prayer, followed by the reading of Romans i. 1-25.

The first part of my discourse was founded on the 21-23 verses of the chapter read, with the corresponding verses in Ephesians iv. 17, 18.

Poor Don Franceseo had rung the bells for a storm, little thinking that a very different storm would break over himself in the presence of about 300 people, whom he calls his sheep !

In the second part I explained that my mission was not at all sectarian, as this priest some years ago trumpeted about.

Romans i. 1-5, and the words of Jesus Christ in Matthew xxviii. 18-20, and in Mark xvi. 15, 16, served to prove my assertion—*first*, that my calling is not of man, but that it has been laid upon me as a sacred duty by my conscience, and that all who bear the name of Christian ought to feel the same ; *second*, that I belong to no political sect, but to a congregation of Christians, whose honoured boast it is that they are descended in a direct line from the primitive Church of the Apostles, and who have endured all the persecutions of the sovereign executioners of Rome and their allies, but have never bowed the knee to the infamous idol of the Vatican.

The third part was altogether to edification on the 6th and 7th, 15th and 16th verses of the chapter. I spent more time in this than the other two parts on account of various digressions, such as 1 Cor. xv. 2, and others similar. I closed with prayer.

The priest in his turn wanted to justify himself, and said that as this day was the anniversary of the Festival of the Holy Chair of St Peter, and as the place was called after him, the inhabitants of Castello were at least bound to go to mass, and for that reason he had rung the bells. (It would have been for the first time !) He then complained of the first part of my discourse, saying that according to his judgment I had given too severe an application to the words of St Paul. Finally, he excused himself—1st. That he was not aware that Protestants were Christians ; 2nd. That he could not compete with me, for I was too well up in Bible doctrine, and the doctrines of his confession ; 3rd. He found fault with those who had brought him thither by force to listen to what he from choice would not have listened to.

By this time it was night, and I prepared to proceed to Salisano, but to prevent this my horse had been laid violent hands on, so that I was obliged to remain in Castel S. Pietro all night. I cannot describe the delight of these good folks at having pushed their chaplain against the wall. But you must not think they are evangelical ; they only rejoice in seeing that evangelicals are able to cope with Roman Catholicism, which has held them in slavery. They are sceptics, ignorant ones, and know not what they believe !

The Bishop complains of me, and says that I have infected all the Sabines, over and above Poggio Mirteto itself, with Luther's doctrines, and that no one salutes him except those subject to him.

G. S.

(Written in Italian.)

VITTORIA (SICILY), 14th March 1881.

WHEN I reached Vittoria after a drive of eighteen hours, I was tolerably tired, sleepy, and hungry, and I would willingly have gone to rest for a little, but I had to settle accounts with the dear Victorians, who no sooner heard of my arrival, than they vied with each other to come and shake me by the hand and offer their services. I did not venture to tell them, neither would I hurt their feelings by telling them, that the greatest service they could do me was to leave me quiet for a little. A meeting had been called, not of the club but of the church members, for one o'clock in the morning, and I had to preside at it in spite of the weariness which possessed me. It is true that sleep and fatigue left me when I saw before me a good meeting of upwards of a hundred people, among whom were about fifty women. The last time I came to Vittoria there were no women at the meetings, and I know they were not then in the habit of attending ; the presence of so many at this meeting gave me much pleasure and surprised me. They have only attended for a short time since the new locale was opened, for they never entered the old place. Giardina and Arnao have told me that since the opening of the new hall there have always been from nine to fifteen present, but they have never seen so many at the meetings as on

this occasion. I put forth my best efforts both that first evening and the following ones, until yesterday.

On Friday evening the numbers had doubled. I calculate that there were two hundred present, and on Saturday, when all the peasants come to town, at least two hundred and fifty came and remained in the hall for over an hour. I do not count those who stood outside and listened, though I am told these were many. During the day and in the evening of Saturday, and for some hours on Sunday morning, the catechumens presented themselves for examination. There were people passed before me of every kind and form, and I would almost say colour, did I not know that the inhabitants of Vittoria belonged to the white Caucasian race, and I have heard replies of every kind. Were it a thing to joke about, I would declare that there is a manufactory of catechumens, so numerous were they. I don't know the number inscribed, but I know that a great number passed before me, before "the two professors" of this place, and before the Session of the Church. They were not all admitted, yet twenty-five were considered worthy, six of whom were women. If I were asked for my opinion on the character of these new admissions, I should say that they seem to me good, with the exception of three or four, to whom I would not have given a favourable vote. On the whole I was satisfied, and with some more than satisfied. Five or six replied in such a manner to all the questions put to them that better could not be desired, and they have already given sure proof of faith, perseverance, and true Christianity. There was one catechumen such as is rarely to be met with, and I take advantage of this letter to tell you something about him. He is a youth, 91 years of age (I say ninety-one), born in 1790, quite firm on his feet, and enjoying all his faculties except his sight, which is a good deal weakened! He yet speaks as the Sicilians of the beginning of this century spoke, and calls every one who wears a hat "Your Excellency" and "Your Worship." When I saw him presented to the Session by his sons, I thought that at his age he would not be able to reply; but I soon found out my mistake. Here are some of the questions put to him and his replies. I am sorry not to be able to give them in Sicilian, but I shall try to translate as literally as possible:—

Q. Well, Mr Biagio, do you want, then, to become an evangelical?

A. Yes, excellency, because in the new church there is the truth.

Q. What is Jesus Christ to you ?

A. Everything.

Q. What has Jesus Christ done ?

A. He has died on the cross for my sake.

Q. Are there other Saviours ?

A. Perhaps there are, but I don't know them.

Q. Before He died what did Jesus Christ give to His disciples ?

A. The Holy Supper. He gave them bread to eat and wine to drink ; what else could He give them ?

Q. Where does the soul go after death ?

A. Where God wills ; but heaven is for the good who believe on the Son of God. I trust in God for my salvation, and I pray to God alone, and I repeat the Lord's Prayer in my own way (that is in Sicilian).

Q. Mr Biagio, will you be faithful unto death in this your faith ?

A. And what other shall I seek ? When laid out on my death-bed I shall not have the priest, but the evangelical minister. For many years we have been in darkness, but now I say : " Long live God's truth ! "

The services of the admission of the catechumens and the observance of the Lord's Supper were of great edification to all who took part in them. For my part, I look upon it as a favour granted me by the Lord that I have been permitted to partake with these new brethren, and to have been chosen to administer that august sacrament for the first time in these parts.

A. MALAN.

(Written in Italian.)

VENICE, 5th April, 1881.

ESTEEMED SIR AND DEAR BROTHER,—I have received with much pleasure an invitation from our beloved President to write something about the Waldensian Church in Venice for the readers of the *Voice from Italy*, and I respond without delay.

If the felt need for religious instruction and for spiritual food is an evident sign of religious life, then we have reason to be grateful to God, for the principal service on Sunday always

gathers together many brethren intent on listening to the Divine Word. There is no service at which are not seen a varying number of outside hearers, who stand at the end of the hall, look round on the Bible passages written on the walls, and finally lend an ear to the preacher. Some go away after a few minutes, others remain to the end. Some of these were overheard saying in a low voice, as if speaking to themselves, "Let the priests say what they like, but these also are Christians!" We have, I think, reason to be pleased at the good name our Church enjoys in this town, and this is a proof that our light is set on a candlestick and not under a bushel, and that we are faithful to our motto, "Lux lucet in tenebris!" It frequently happens that in visiting brethren in their own houses, I meet other persons who have a sufficient knowledge of the Gospel, and whose tone of religious thought is identical with our own. They have attended and still occasionally attend our meetings, are instructed and edified, speak favourably of them, but hesitate to give their formal and explicit adhesion to the Church. Some are timid Nicodemuses, others are held back by the fear of losing material advantages did they proclaim themselves evangelical; but I console myself with the thought that there are true disciples among these, who "follow not Christ with us."—Luke ix. 49, 50.

The Church numbers 165 members, almost all belonging to Venice, and all come out of the Romish Church. This number, which was that given in the last Report of the Committee, will soon be increased by the arrival of some brethren from elsewhere, and the admission of five or possibly more catechumens. These last are of special interest, two are the wives of husbands already evangelical—"How knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?" 1 Cor. vii. 16; one the husband of an evangelical wife—"For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband?" the fourth, at one time deprived of membership, now asks to be re-admitted, expressing great contrition; the fifth is a soldier in the army, well instructed, desirous of knowing more, greatly attached to the Gospel, and anxious one day to become a minister of Christ. When we consider that in families of mixed religion domestic peace too often becomes war, we cannot but rejoice exceedingly that husbands and wives are being enrolled under Christ's banner, to be of one spirit as they are of one flesh.

Our Church is not alone at work in Venice ; a short distance off are the *locales* of the Free Italian and Methodist Episcopal Churches. We had the pleasure of holding union prayer meetings successively in the different churches in the first week of January. The attendance each evening of members of all three churches and of strangers, particularly of the lower classes, was very great, and much astonishment was expressed at the large number of evangelicals in Venice.

The "Queen of the Adriatic" is a bigoted city ; the authorities are clerical, but liberty of conscience is respected. It is only in the remote quarters that the people howl and create a disturbance when a Protestant burial takes place ; yet even there we are past those times when missiles were thrown at those who carried the body to the grave. When recently a large new cemetery was made, a beautiful position was set aside for the evangelicals, and once I conducted a funeral service in the same mortuary chapel which is used by the Roman Catholics. The wooden crucifix did not tremble, the images did not shake, but if Monsignore the Patriarch had known, he would have cried out against the sacrilege !

The day schools are attended by about forty scholars, mostly children of evangelicals. But we note with lively pleasure that those few whose parents are Catholic are not the least assiduous nor the least diligent at their lessons. Two dear little sisters especially, whom their parents wished to send to another school on account of the great distance they have to come, protested with tears, that they did not wish to go to any other but the evangelical school, even though they had double the distance to go. Many grown-up people might take a lesson from these little ones. The Sunday School is a source of special satisfaction to me. It gathers into it all the evangelical children who attend the public schools in the town, and is a good first year's preparation for the young catechumens, who act as teachers.

In the beginning of February last I paid a visit to the dear brethren of Pederobba, a village distant about forty miles from Venice. No sooner had I arrived there than I was told the sad news of the death and burial of a young man who used to attend our meetings, and whose father professed to be evangelical. The brethren had attended him, watching incessantly by his bedside that the priests might not take advantage of that sorrowful

time, as they are in the habit of doing, to draw back the dying man to the Church of Rome. When, however, the poor youth was no longer sensible, and the first symptoms of dying agony appeared, the Catholic women began to scream and to weep and to cry out that the priest must come to administer extreme unction. A crowd of people gathered round the door, the fanaticism of these mountaineers threatened to lead to harm, and the head of the family took fright, so that he begged our courageous brethren in the faith to withdraw to make room for the priest, who triumphantly came to do what he said was "his affair." "If I do not save him, no one else can!" he exclaimed, speaking of the dying one. But the young man no longer stood in need of salvation ; he was safe through faith in Christ the Saviour, whom he devotedly loved, and for whom, so long as he could speak, he did not cease to bear witness. Jesus received his spirit, and the priest carried off his body.

In the evening we had a meeting in a hall of the palace of the Countess Onigo, a sister in the faith. The Lord's Supper was administered to twelve brethren and sisters. I was much surprised and comforted in seeing the apostolic procedure of these people. Thus—a new brother was presented to me for admission. The thing had been deliberated among themselves. As at first I seemed doubtful, they stood up and bore good testimony to the new catechumen, as those of Lystra and Iconium had done to Timothy, and I could not do otherwise than follow Paul's example and receive the neophyte. I have not the slightest doubt that this way of adding to the "Church such as should be saved," gives a surer guarantee than any other. Then again—having that same evening to take an exact note of the members of that small but interesting congregation, I observed that a name was missing ; the name of the father of the young man lately dead of whom I have spoken. In this case also the brethren had decided among themselves that he should no longer be counted among the evangelicals, having given way to the intimidations of his family, and allowed the priest to disturb the last moments of his son ! On this, however, a brother rose and said that that father wished the Church to know of his repentance, that he asked forgiveness for his weakness, and beseeched not to be taken out of the number of the brethren, promising, with God's help, to be henceforth more firm and courageous.

Touched by this spontaneous confession, we all consented to consider the poor father as still a member of the Church.

Trusting, dear Sir, that these notices will interest the readers of the *Voice from Italy*, I offer you my respectful greetings.

BART. PONS.

(Written in French.)

PIGNEROL, 9th April 1881.

DEAR SIR,—It appears to me that the people most opposed to the preaching of the Gospel are those whose ancestors played a prominent part in the persecutions and sufferings inflicted on the Vaudois. A Roman Catholic working-man said to me the other day : “The chief actors in the bloody slaughter of your ancestors were merely obeying a blind impulse. The Priests uttered the cry of ‘Wolf, wolf,’ and it was responded to on all sides by a rush to arms.” These words describe very accurately the state of mind of the clergy in Pignerol at the present day. The late liberal-minded bishop, whose name figured among other illustrious names in the Petition for the Emancipation of the Vaudois, has been succeeded in the diocese by an Ultramontane, whose efforts are chiefly directed against the Vaudois, and in upholding the honour and worship of the Virgin Mary. The preachers for Lent vied with each other in their endeavours to bring the Pignerolais more frequently to confession, and their sermons were full of allusions to the danger of allowing intimate relations to exist between Roman Catholics and the heretic Vaudois. The zeal and perseverance which they display in maligning us, and in sowing distrust of us in the minds of their adherents, are worthy of a better cause. As their own religious doctrines will not stand either examination or discussion, this is really their only means of defence, and it succeeds in a measure with the shop-people and working-classes, but not with the better educated class. It is to the latter class that we are indebted for the privilege of burying in the Cemetery belonging to the Commune,—a privilege which was long most vigorously disputed by the clergy. Our opponents were not slow in perceiving that a great danger to their authority lay in our schools, by means of which the popular superstitions and ignor-

ance, which it is their interest to maintain, would soon be removed. They therefore brought all their energies and clerical authority to bear against the schools, but without accomplishing much. All who attend the schools must be provided with a copy of the Bible, but they were warned by the priests not to read it by themselves. In reply to the attacks made on us by the preachers, I gave a course of lectures which were well attended.

One lecture on the subject "Extra ecclesiam nulla salus," roused the indignation of the clergy, but our Sunday services benefited by the agitation, and were more largely attended by Roman Catholics than formerly. Funeral services are often a means of getting at some people who would never think of coming to our Church. For instance, the death of an officer in the Italian army, who had been brought to a knowledge of Jesus Christ, gave me an opportunity of making Gospel truths known to a part of the garrison, and especially to a large number of officers. But my greatest happiness is to speak to the poor of a Saviour's love. When I happen to be visiting a Vaudois in the poor-house, I like to gather all the other poor creatures round me, and to speak to them out of a full heart, and their attentive interest is very touching.

You must not, however, think that even so-called liberal-minded people are always favourably inclined to our work. A well-known advocate took occasion the other day to lecture against our evangelical propaganda, and announced that religious tolerance does not include the liberty of proselytising. This advocate's religious opinions do not, happily, carry very much weight. Besides the schools in Pignerol, we have two at St Savard, both making fair progress. The one under M. Jourdon numbers no less than forty pupils, who attend the Sunday School as well. The preparatory school, for very young children, is taught by a young Vaudoise woman, who is well qualified for the post, and gives great satisfaction to the parents of her ten or eleven pupils. There is a school open at La Givieta during four months in winter. It receives most devoted care and attention from M. Jean Fourneron. He had thirty scholars last winter, of whom Roman Catholics formed a large proportion. There is a very large Sunday School at Pignerol, but only two Roman Catholic children among them. Our Sunday services are largely attended by Roman Catholics, and

not unfrequently by students from the Lycée. The contributions towards the work of advancing God's kingdom ought to be liberal, to judge by the warm reception given to the Pasteur of Villesèche, who has come to collect money for a new church in his parish.

The kindness and liberality of the Committee of Evangelisation, in providing a substitute, enabled the Pasteur of Pignerol to carry out, last February, his long-cherished plan of visiting the country between Cumiana and Coni, and from Revello to Moncaliori. He returned with the joyful assurance that the Gospel will find ready acceptance in that part of the country. I must now tell you something about our efforts in the neighbourhood of Turin. The work was going on well at Orbajiano, until a serious mistake was made by the Pasteur in admitting and entering as members of his church many who were not ready or qualified for admittance. This hasty and undignified conduct gave rise to many disputes and arguments, and will hinder the progress of the work for some time to come. From Orbajiano I went on to Frana, where I was most warmly received by our excellent friend M. Jean Revel. The day following my arrival I held a meeting in a room in the inn, and the audience of sixty people included the schoolmaster and the son of the Syndic. Since then our work progresses, in spite of much opposition from the priests. They have successfully deprived us of three different meeting places, but we hope now to have secured a room for ourselves. The attendance at our last meetings has varied from ten to forty. I missed one of our warmest friends on the occasion of my last visit to Frana, and, on expressing surprise, I was told that his absence was the result of his daughter's entreaties. In a prayer-book belonging to a young girl I was sorry to find that even there the priest had written words insulting and disparaging to the Vaudois.—Yours faithfully and affectionately,

F. CARDON.

CASA ALBERTO, LA SPEZIA,
ITALY, 9th April 1881.

Having recently come from Scotland as an assistant missionary in connection with the "Spezia Mission," and having seen the good

work in which its labourers have been and still are engaged, I feel sure it will be interesting to friends at home to hear a few facts regarding it. The day schools in Spezia number 250 children, who come at a very early age to our infant school, and remain with us until they have attained the age and knowledge whereby they can partially support themselves. The teachers, I believe, have a great and growing love for this important work to which God has called them, and it has been very encouraging to hear them on different occasions unfolding to their scholars the truths of the Gospel even in the midst of the secular lessons. Two of the more advanced girls, who years ago were brought to the infant school, are now assistant teachers in the school, and promise to be not only useful as teachers, but also, we trust, in leading their younger sisters to the Saviour.

The *Sunday Schools* are held every Sunday morning at 9.30, when we have from 50 to 60 children present, notwithstanding the great difficulties peculiar to this work in Italy. These children all come to the week day schools, and are separated into classes according to the stage which they have reached in Bible knowledge.

The *Bible Class*, held every Sunday afternoon at 3 o'clock, is attended by about 25 persons, who are instructed in the leading doctrines of the Gospel. This class is affording a great means of blessing.

The *Preaching Services* every Sunday morning and evening are well attended, and there is manifest a spirit of earnest seeking after "the truth as it is in Jesus." The same must be said of the preaching services every Monday and Friday evening, when the *locale* is frequently crowded with an attentive audience.

I have been wonderfully and pleasingly struck with the *spirit of prayer* which many of the friends here have lately manifested. Mr Clarke, the beloved and esteemed pastor of this Mission, has lately held several special morning prayer meetings, when from 40 to 50 have been present.

One is thus sincerely thankful and hopeful, as he sees in Spezia "the increase" appearing, where, in the past, some planted, some watered. And not only in *Spezia*, but at the *Mission Stations* in connection with the "Spezia Missions." These now number 9, and at most of them there are day and Sunday schools in addition to the preaching services.

J. S. ANDERSON.

Written in Italian.

RIESI, SICILY, 8th April 1881.

DEAR SIR AND BROTHER IN JESUS CHRIST,—I reply with much pleasure to the invitation to give some account of the actual state of our Church at Riesi.

I am glad to say that in spite of the death of some of its best members, and even in spite of the underhand war carried on against it by the priests, it is at present in a satisfactory condition. There are fifty-four members, an attendance on worship of sixty, and a Sunday-school numbering thirty children. We can say of the greater part of the members of our Church that they are a great comfort to us on account of their sincere faith, their exemplary life, and their intense love for the extension of the kingdom of God.

The neighbours of one of our dear sisters said of her the other day, “Mrs S. is truly evangelical ; she would give her life for the Gospel. And how devoted she is in her love for the services of her Church ! When in bed last week, ill with fever, she was in tears—not for the pain she was suffering, but because she was prevented from attending the evangelical service. It is a good thing she soon got better, for I do believe she would have gone to her church with the fever on her !” And, indeed, that dear sister is never absent, and attends even when not very able for it.

Not long since an old man, impressed perhaps by the consistent conduct of our brother C. P., went about saying, “I want to be of the religion of C. P. ; in it I wish to die !” C. P. is a poor tradesman ; he and his family are evangelicals in Riesi.

Another brother, who has gone to settle at Aidone, not far from Riesi, having occasion to come to Riesi for two days, related to us some encouraging facts about Aidone, where he is trying to form a nucleus of evangelicals. We were struck with his reply to a gentleman of Aidone, who, though calling himself evangelical, does nothing for the Gospel. “Sir,” said our brother to him, “I do not deny that you are evangelical, but I must not omit to say to you that if you had in your possession a head of corn, which you kept shut up in your room in the dark, you would certainly always be the possessor of that head of corn, but take the grains and sow them, and oh, what joy ! What an abundant ingathering !”

The comparison seemed to us telling, and reveals the missionary spirit by which our brother is animated.

We have lately had several losses among the brethren. The last of these died about three weeks ago, giving an excellent testimony to the faith that was in him. Some hours before he expired he sang the hymn, "Safe in the Arms of Jesus;" then, after having prayed with him for the last time, he said, "How happy I am to go to the Church of God, to the Church in Heaven!"

For a month past one of the brethren has been ill, who, poor man, would have died for want of food and care, had not the others rallied round him, and looked after him. All could not give money, but those who could not gave some flour, some wine, &c. All combined unweariedly to visit him, although he lives in a grotto (literally a grotto) cut out of the upper part of a high hill, difficult to climb. Just look at us clambering up that hill-side! We must needs be more agile than goats!

The sick man is now nearly well, and declares he could never have expected so much help from the members of our church, knowing, as he does, their poverty.

We have just had a visit from Signor Augusto Malan of Messina. His coming has done us much good. He was here four days, and each evening we had good meetings, with ever-increasing audiences. Imagine our joy on seeing the ninety and more seats all occupied, and about forty people standing about in the passages and at the end of the hall.

The celebration of the Lord's Supper was very solemn. Two new brethren, and a sister, wife of an old and zealous member, were admitted. Of the other two new members, one is the father of a family, a small farmer; the other a sulphur worker, and a young man, of whom all speak well. His mother dotes on him, and says, "Since my son has begun to attend the evangelical services he is quite changed." And let us add, the good example of the son has attracted the mother to our meetings. The master under whom this new brother works has spoken most favourably of him to one of our deacons, closing with these precise words, "I don't understand how you evangelicals manage to remould people." We have one advantage, which perhaps other towns in Italy do not possess, and that is, that every house in Riesi opens its door to us, and we can speak freely of the

Gospel. We are now well known in Riesi as men teaching religion. When the Gospel began to be preached here, which fortunately was in the Catholic Church of S. Giuseppe, the hundreds and hundreds of people who flocked to hear it were convinced that we are neither heretics nor infidels, but Christians according to the Gospel. The Riesanis have been confirmed in this opinion by witnessing the edifying death of several of our brethren. On such occasions the people of Riesi have not failed to follow to the grave the mortal remains of these brethren ; and at the cemetery, standing either on a table, or perhaps on a tomb-stone, so as to be better heard, we have preached the Gospel to as many as six thousand people.

Being, then, known as men who preach the religion of God, it is no marvel if we are received by families in the best possible manner. A few days ago, for example, on entering the house of a poor family, only one member of which is evangelical, we were welcomed with joy. The neighbours also came in to hear about Jesus. The mistress of the house took down from the rustic shelf the seats, which were kept up there for want of room below, dusted them and offered them to the incomers. All could not be seated, for there were not seats for twelve persons, but all listened gladly, and promised to come to our service. Accordingly some did come, but others did not, because we do not yet possess a "Temple"—a church building. How, many and how many who are persuaded of the truth of our religion, will not worship with us because we do not worship in a *Temple*! The want of a church is a serious difficulty for the progress of the work in Riesi. If we had a *locale* with the form and appearance of a church, many would come, and our work would get a new impulse. All our friends who have visited Riesi are convinced of the urgent need of an Evangelical Church here. The Committee of Evangelisation is of the same opinion, and would willingly help in the building of a church, but they have not the means. Oh, how desirable it would be that Christians of other countries should come to the aid of our Committee for the erection of our much longed for Evangelical Temple ! Blessings from heaven would shower upon these generous benefactors ! Eternal gratitude would be given them by the people of Riesi ! The brethren of our church in Riesi are willing to contribute something, but what they can best do is to give their labour, carrying water,

plaster, stones, &c., which they would do with a happy heart, seeing the realisation of their golden dream. Dear sir, will you also ask the Lord to bless the work in Riesi more and more, and to grant us that which we so much need ? On our side we shall not forget to pray for you, and for all those who are interested in the work in Riesi and throughout all Italy.

Accept the cordial salutations of yours faithfully in Jesus Christ.

VINCENZO NOTARBARTOLO.

NOTES OF THE QUARTER.

PROFESSOR COMBA has, during the past winter, continued with much success his conferences in the Hall adjoining the Alfieri Theatre. During Lent some of his lectures were devoted to a refutation of statements made by several of the Lent preachers concerning Protestant doctrines, and on these occasions not only was the hall crowded by a most intelligent audience, but large numbers assembled in the street who were unable to obtain an entrance. Controversy has, however, occupied but a small part of these conferences, which are generally devoted to lectures on the life of Christ. These have been usually attended by upwards of two hundred persons. In the month of February a Sunday school was commenced in this hall, which is attended by a considerable number of scholars, and promises to produce good results.

For some years the Wesleyan Methodists have had no congregation in Florence, but in the beginning of this winter the Rev. Mr Foster, who for several years has been assisting the Rev. Mr Piggott in Rome, was removed to this city, and has lately succeeded in renting a hall in a central part of the city. Sig. Tollis has been removed from Milan to labour here, and services will be commenced in the beginning of May.

On the 13th of February a place of worship in connection with the *Chiesa Libera* was opened at Mottola, in the extreme south of the peninsula. This church was erected at the expense of one of the members of that congregation. The commencement, however, of such a work so excited the rage of the priestly party, that a few Sundays afterwards they attacked the church, and

attempted to drive in the door and windows, and afterwards collected in crowds around the dwelling of the evangelist, where they remained for hours shouting and uttering threats.

Still more serious was the outbreak which the Roman Catholics made against the Methodist congregation at Marsala. There the evangelist was obliged to escape for his life along the roofs of the houses, and the furniture and books were taken from the place of meeting and burnt in the public square. Incredible as it may appear, the municipal band met and played in the square while this was going on, and after the mob had wreaked their vengeance on the evangelici, they retired to the cathedral where they were blessed by one of the priests.

The King and Queen of Italy have lately made a tour through some of the principal cities of Sicily, where they have met with a most enthusiastic reception. During most of their other travels the Bishops of the towns that they visited found it convenient to be absent from their diocese at the time of their Sovereign's arrival. In Sicily, however, the clergy acted differently, and came forward to welcome their King and Queen. Their conduct on this occasion lately formed the subject of an article in the *Osservatore Romano*, which wishes its readers distinctly to understand that this is not to be understood as any sign of reconciliation between the Church and the Italian Government. It gives a long account of the pressure that was brought to bear upon these clergy, and explains that what they did was merely to avoid popular indignation, and, perhaps, civil consequences. Rome thus shows that it is as fierce an enemy as ever to all loyal and patriotic feelings.

On the 20th February, at a meeting of the Sacred College, the Pope intimated that he had resolved to have this year a special jubilee through all Christendom, "in order that prayers and holy deeds being multiplied, the Lord may be more speedily inclined to clemency, and prepare better times for the Church." During the reign of Pius IX. six jubilees were proclaimed, and already, during three years, Leo XIII. has proclaimed two. The proclamation seems now to fall on very careless ears.

J. B. W.

NEW YORK COMMITTEE.

Contributions for the Home Mission Fund of the Waldensian Church will be received by the Treasurer of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, 33 Centre Street, New York City.